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JAMES MENZIES SPRUNT,

BORN AT

Perth, Scotland, January 14th, 1818,

DIED AT

Kenansville, N. C., Dec. 6th, 1884.

"Mark the perfect man and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace."

WILMINGTON, N. C.:

DeROSSET & MEARES, Printers, Publishers and Binders.

1885.



A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT

Union Church, Faison, N. C., January 11th, 1885,

ON THE DEATH OF

Rev. Jas. M. Sprunt, D. D.,

BY

PETER MCINTYRE.

“My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.”

MUCH is to be learned from the Bible of the death scenes of its characters—mourning, sad wailing, gleams of hope, full assurance of immortality.

In the 5th chapter of Genesis we read, “All the days of Adam were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died; the days of Seth nine hundred and twelve years, and he died; Enos nine hundred and five years, and he died; Cainan nine hundred and ten years, and he died;” and thus and thus the list goes on, each one ending with “*and he died.*” No word here of heaven, no glimpse of what is *beyond*.

We read, again, that “Abraham gave up the ghost and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.” Here, again, though the founder of the Jewish Church, we have in this death nothing of immortality.

But very early in the Sacred History we are given a glimpse of a future existence: “Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.”

Coming a little way nearer ourselves, down Time’s steady river, we reach the death of Moses. The sage, the warrior, the law-giver, the prophet, at the age of one hundred and twenty, with his eye undimmed and his natural force una-

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bated, laid him down to die and the people lamented him thirty days. What wonder ! Their trust, their staff was removed. He who had never failed them in their direst distress, who had borne with their murmurings, who had led them from the land of bondage, who had secret converse with their God, who received laws for the people direct from the Omnipotent, dead ! What wonder that they lamented.

Joshua dead ! The bold warrior who drove out the enemy and gave Israel a home, and the people lamented for him.

Samuel dead ! A pure man, pure from his infancy,—the only upright among a corrupt priesthood—a judge to the people, a leader in stormy times—dead ! And the people gathered together and lamented for him.

A royal prince, David's son, dead ! The King, in sackcloth and ashes, prays for the recovery of his child, but he dies, and David says, "Wherefore should I fast ? Can I bring him back again ? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me." A darker death is in the same family : This time the cry of David, the afflicted, is, "O, Absalom, my son, my son ! Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son."

Abner dead, and the King says : "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day?"

Dorcas dead, and the women stood round showing the garments she had made, and telling of the good deeds she had done. and lamenting her departure.

Lazarus dead ! See Mary weeping in the house ! see Martha sobbing on the highway ! See the tears that fall from the Saviour's eyes, and fall at the foot of the sepulchre !

Christ himself dead ! The earth trembles ; the hills are shaken to their base, and the sun hides in darkness. The hope of the little band of disciples taken away and they in despair until the messenger returns with the glorious news that He is not dead but risen again.

From these instances, my friends, we can draw much com-

fort when called upon to mourn the death of some dear friend. The mourning of the people for their leaders, the lamentations of David, and his hopes of future reunion, the tender recollections of Dorcas; the raising of Lazarus, and, above all, the resurrection of Jesus, strike in our hearts sympathetic chords, and console us in our bereavement.

To-day, my friends, we are called upon to bewail the death of our dear pastor, the Rev. JAMES M. SPRUNT. This is the first time since his death that we, his flock, have met together in this house, where so oft we listened to his words of truth and peace, and were comforted.

Remembering all that he was to us, the great confidence and trust that we reposed in him, the joy we felt in his ministry and the destitution in which his death has left us, we lament him with sorrow akin to the woe of the people for their law-giver Moses, their warrior Joshua, their pure priest and prophet, Samuel. Lament him as David did when he cried, "Know ye not that a prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel." Lament him for his good works as was Dorcas bewailed. The tender ties of friendship that caused sorrow at the death of Lazarus cause us like sorrow to-day.

But more appropriate to us, perhaps, than any of these passages cited is the lamentation of Elisha for Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" You doubtless remember the circumstances of Elijah's departure—how he and his servant and disciple, Elisha, together crossed the Jordan; how Elijah vainly persuaded his follower not to cross over; how that follower persisted in remaining with him to the last; how a chariot and horses, bright with the effulgence of heaven, took Elijah upward and left Elisha alone, gazing after the wonderful sight and crying, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

What, my brethren, is there in the cry of this solitary He-

brew, alone in the wilderness, and what in it can we make applicable to our situation and in unison with our feelings to-day?

We hear in this the cry of bereavement, of sorrowing affliction, at the severing of the strong chord of parental attachment. Elijah had indeed been a father to Elisha. Both were prophets, exponents of the Word of God. They lived together and held mutual communion with God. Elijah was old, experienced, had tested once and again the eternal truths of his Heavenly King, knew the strength that comes from trust in Him, realized the love of God shed abroad in the heart. Elisha was young, inexperienced, impatient, inclined at times to doubt and murmur. The elder man had come through all these trials and had triumphed. Who better could advise, comfort, sustain, teach his young friend? Who better could point out to him the way upward? Strong, deep and tender must have been the association of the two.

The Rev. J. M. SPRUNT was to us a father like unto Elijah. He had himself striven through all the perplexities and vicissitudes of the Christian life, and had reached that point where—

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swell from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Which of us that had doubts and took them to him but had them removed? Which of us that had perplexities and told him of them but had them brushed away? Hath he not often encouraged you, strengthened you, enlightened you, pacified you? Ye older members of his flock, who have known his worth these many years, and to whom he was as an elder brother; ye young adherents of his, drawn to the Christ he loved by the sweetness and earnestness of his pleading, can you not, each one of you, with truth cry as did Elisha of old, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof"?

Besides this personal bereavement we gather from our text national loss: "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Time and again had Elijah heroically, undauntedly and alone, risen up for the salvation of his people. Sometimes, when they were assailed by heathen foes, he had wrought them deliverance. Sometimes, when they forsook their God and brought upon them the displeasure of the Holy One of Israel, he had brought them back to a better state of heart. He had delivered them by a mighty miracle (by the calling of fire from heaven) from the worship of the beastly Baal. He had restored their dead to life, and fed their widowed ones. He had taught them pure religion and undefiled.

Does not the similitude again strike you—the likeness between this man and our dead pastor? Heroic and undaunted, can you not, some of you at least, see him on the battle field, caring for the wounded, comforting the dying—hesitating not to encounter danger where good might be done? Do you not remember how, at home, he rebuked vice and dishonesty, both public and private; how an unclean, a dishonorable thing sought to hide itself from him abashed; how to all within his acquaintance, both inside and without his own particular Church, he was a standard, and a high one, of honor, truth, purity, knowledge, goodness and charity?

Then might we not also speak of his usefulness to his county in the public office which he so long and so well filled? His clear intellect and extensive learning, freely given to all who sought, but especially to the needy, the illiterate and the befogged, saved to many such time, money, property and harrassing anxiety. Public loss, great and irreparable, comes from the heart of Elisha. Public loss, great and irreparable, is felt in our hearts, as once more we repeat, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

I know that this church session and the officers of this congregation, to whom he was a stay and bulwark in time of

difficulty, an expounder of law and order, a leader whom it was very safe to follow, can truthfully from their hearts make my text their lamentation. I feel that every communicant and every one baptized by him, realizing that from his hands they can no more partake of the sacred symbols, no more hear his earnest invitation to "Drink ye all of it," must also take up the mournful wail as their own. I judge that every one who listened to his preaching, now that his voice is silent forever, now that no more from his pure lips can they hear words of invitation, pleadings, warnings, love and peace—words fit to stir the soul to its utmost depths and calm it into the stillness and rest of a sweet summer eve; words that wounded but also healed; words that showed the danger but also the way of escape—cannot but sympathize deeply with the lone Elisha: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

And, moreover, the great beauty of the man—the thing, perhaps, to be more admired in him than aught else—the par excellence of his life, is that he became to us all that he was, and yet is more, much more, by his conduct, his secret, silent influence, than by his words. He was no babbler, no shouter, not given to much speaking, nor extraordinary and doubtful methods of revivalism. He was no chattering, noisy brook, nor thundering cascade, but a river, deep, broad, peaceful, fruitful, silently bearing on its bosom much bread, to be returned to it in eternity.

But we cannot express what we feel concerning this much loved pastor of ours; we can but weep.

Weep, Church of Union, weep for one
 Who long hath been your light, your sun;
 His God hath ta'en him home to rest,
 To mansions of the pure, the blest.
 Weep o'er him, shed for him the tear
 That all must shed o'er the great man's bier;
 Pay to his memory that respect

That from each heart Love must direct.
 His was the heart of love, to feel
 His own in his brother's woe or weal.
 His life was as pure as the morning dew;
 His friendship steady, and strong and true;
 His a hand to succor, a voice to cheer
 The needy lot—the lot that was dear.
 Massive of brain, his mind could soar
 From height to height in Wisdom's lore;
 From peak to peak of the vast expanse
 His depth of thought did much enhance
 His work of doing what good he might—
 Life to the dead, to the blind giving sight!
 Steady his light, as a planet, burned—
 To him the fearful, doubting, turned,
 And never failed from his lips to drink
 Words of life, from which doubt would shrink,
 And despair flee away, as the mists of night
 Flee from the glorious morning light.
 A stream in the desert of life he was;
 Of blooming flowers, the source, the cause;
 A tree of strength around which clung
 The fragile ivy, old and young.
 A song of Peace from the God of Love;
 Wise as a serpent, a harmless dove.
 Weep, Church of Union, mourn again,
 The stream hath gone, the deserts remain;
 The tree hath fallen, the song of peace
 Is sung in the Land of the Soul's release.
 To him a jeweled crown is given;
 To him and to all who like him hath striven
 To show to man the path to God.
 Weep o'er him once, as 'neath the sod
 We place him. Drop again a tear
 For this good man's life, this good man's bier.

TRIBUTE OF RESPECT.

At a meeting of the session of Union Church, held to-day, the following resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS, It hath pleased God, in His great providence, to take from our midst our beloved pastor, the Rev. J. M. SPRUNT, D. D.;

Resolved, That his death has fallen heavily upon us, the members and congregation of Union Church. Pastor of this church from 1851 he went in and out among us, working with an eye single to the glory of God. One and all we *loved* him as a friend, as a pastor and as a father. We can never forget his zeal and earnestness in presenting the truths of the Gospel. It was indeed a blessed privilege to sit at his feet and hear from his sweet lips the "Whosoever will." His great heart had room in it for all. His wonderful purity of life and purpose was indeed a "bright and shining light." Remembering his wisdom, his knowledge, his wonderful abnegation of self, his great love and sympathy for mankind, we can but exclaim, "Behold a just man and a perfect;" "Behold a lamb of the fold of God."

Resolved, That we do herein bear testimony to the great worth of our departed shepherd, to the love and esteem in which he was universally held, to the loss that we, his congregation, with others, suffer in his death, and to the hope of meeting him before the pure white throne.

Resolved, That our tenderest sympathies are given to the mourning family and relatives of the deceased, and kindred feelings of deep sorrow extended to the congregations of Kenansville and Mt. Zion churches, who, with us, lament his death.

Resolved, That copies of these resolutions be sent to the bereaved family and to the churches of Kenansville and Mt. Zion, and that they be entered on the minutes of this church, and also that they be published in the *N. C. Presbyterian*.

I. R. FAISON, Clerk pro tem. of Session of Union Ch.

FAISON, N. C., December 14, 1884.

[From the *N. C. Presbyterian.*]

DEATH OF DR. J. M. SPRUNT.

Rev. JAMES M. SPRUNT, D. D., died at his home in Kenansville, N. C., on the afternoon of the 6th inst.

He was born on the 14th of January, 1818, at Perth, Scotland. His education was obtained in Edinburgh. In 1835 he sailed for the West Indies, and there spent a few years in mercantile pursuits. Here, doubtless, he acquired those habits of business-like accuracy which so much increased his efficiency in higher service. In 1839 he came to Wilmington, and soon after commenced teaching in Duplin and Onslow counties. Successively he became principal of Grove Academy at Kenansville and Kenansville Female Institute. Himself a thorough scholar he became a most successful teacher. But the master had for him yet higher work: In 1850 he was licensed by Fayetteville Presbytery to preach the Gospel, and soon after he was ordained and installed pastor of Grove church. Afterward he became pastor of Union church. Early in the war between the States he accompanied the young men of his charge to the battlefield and remained in the service of the Confederacy as chaplain until compelled, near the close of the war, to return home an invalid.

The piety of Dr. Sprunt was of that kind we associate with the life of the beloved disciple. It was a piety that bespoke the true humility of soul that comes of love for the Saviour; a piety that shed a mellow radiance around his path. The striking characteristic of his nature indeed was modesty, real, unaffected; of anything like self-assertion he was incompetent. For him nature made easy what grace made a delight, in honor to prefer all others.

Dr. Sprunt as an elocutionist was peerless. His voice was rich and soft, and his reading of hymns and of the Scripture was as if of inspiration. His precision of thought and accuracy of expression without a trace of stiffness or pedantry were notable. His sermons were logical in arrangement and forceful in strength and originality of ideas. His prayers and his sermons were enriched with a profusion of Scriptural quotations always apposite, never strained or forced into association. His power of adaptation of the words of the Spirit to convey the heavenly message was indeed marvellous; it told of a mind to which those words were treasure, and a heart to which they were delight.

As a Presbyterian Dr. Sprunt was in the front rank. His views were seldom expressed at any length, but they were always weighty and wise. In Presbytery the precision of thought of which we have spoken was often brought into good account in the preparation of resolutions or of papers requiring the strictest accuracy.

One peculiarity apart from his great mission it seems allowable to note, and the more that its refining and softening influence may have largely contributed to efficiency in his life's work. His love for flowers was intense; the taste was innate, and from childhood was cultivated with delight. As a botanist he deserves a name among the foremost. To his study and efforts the domestic flora owes new varieties known throughout the Union, and among botanists, doubtless, throughout the world. But here, as everywhere, his shrinking nature made him content to be unknown, in the sense of being prominently known, beyond the sphere of his own nearest friends.

But wherever Dr. SPRUNT was known he was beloved. And this is the testimony, after all, that tells his great worth. His first ministerial charge was his life-charge and his last. Among the people that he loved, and by whom he was so much beloved, he lived and labored, and by them was laid to his earthly rest.

[From the *Wilmington Review*.]

DEATH OF AN EMINENT DIVINE.

Rev. JAMES M. SPRUNT, D. D., died at his home in Kenansville, Duplin county, at about 5 o'clock last Saturday night, aged 66 years. The cause of his death was an aggravated case of dyspepsia, a disease with which he had suffered for more than a year. He had, however, continued his labors until within the past few weeks. In fact it was only six weeks ago that he was in the city, looking and feeling remarkably well, so that he thought he was in a fair way of recovery. The deceased was born near Edinburgh, Scotland, and was educated at the famed University of Edinburgh. He came to America in 1845, although previous to that time he had travelled extensively in the West Indies. Upon his arrival in this country he proceeded directly to Kenansville, where he always lived up to the time of his death, and where he married and built him a home. For many years he was engaged in teaching, a vocation in which he was eminently successful. It was while thus engaged that he prepared himself for the ministry. As a Christian minister he was pastor of the Presbyterian church at Kenansville from the time of his ordination to the day of his death.

The deceased was a brother of the late Mr. Alex. Sprunt of this city. and leaves a family of four daughters, three of whom are married, and two sons—Mr. N. H. Sprunt, formerly in business in this city but now residing at Kenansville, and Mr. J. E. Sprunt of this city. His wife, a most amiable woman, died several years since. During the war the deceased was chaplain of the 20th North Carolina Infantry, and did efficient and faithful service in that position.

Rev. Dr. Sprunt was a profound scholar in *belles lettres* literature as well as in the classics. Besides Latin, Greek and Hebrew he spoke the French and Spanish languages with ease and fluency. He was an excellent botanist and took much delight in the cultivation and propagation of rare and beautiful plants and flowers. In his disposition he was singularly modest and retiring, and in conversation he was interesting and instructive. He was an earnest, devout and conscientious Christian teacher, and was beloved by all who knew him. He was Register of Deeds of Duplin county for many years, a trust which he discharged with the most rigid fidelity. His presence, his influence for good and his pious Christian teachings will be sadly missed by those who have so long known and loved him.





